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FM AMEMBASSY ANTANANARIVO

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0858

INFO RUEHZO/AFRICAN UNION COLLECTIVE

RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI

RHMFIUU/CJTF HOA

RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC

RUEKDIA/DIA WASHDC

RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC

RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 0956

UNCLAS ANTANANARIVO 000031

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

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ADDIS FOR USAU

DEPT FOR AF/E, AF/FO, INR/AA, AND DRL

DEPT FOR DS/IP/AF/E RMEDRANO

PARIS FOR AFRICA WATCHER

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: COLONEL BACAR CRACKS DOWN ON ANJOUAN RESIDENTS

REF: A) ANTANANARIVO 25 AND PREVIOUS

¶11. (U) Tension continues to escalate throughout the Union of the Comoros. With the possibility of a Union Army landing to take back Anjouan growing every day (refs), Colonel Mohamed Bacar is consolidating his control over the island. He is reportedly positioning his forces at the hospital in the main town of Mutsamudu in hopes the civilian presence will deter Union Army forces from attacking, although Anjouan authorities claim their military engineers are merely there to build an office. Bacar has also begun arresting his opponents, proceeding down a list of 60 of Union President Ahmed Abdallah Sambi's family and supporters to be arrested before the Union Army lands. President Sambi's cousin Omar Abdallah Ahmed Sambi was arrested, while Omar's wife, children, and President Sambi's cousins fled Anjouan by boat in the middle of the night to the neighboring island of Moheli. They are now safely on the island of Grande Comore, but Omar is still in prison. There are no direct threats to the 18 American citizens in the country at this time: 17 reside on Grande Comore, 1 on Moheli, and none on Anjouan.

¶12. (U) On January 12, the Union Government sent a diplomatic note to all foreign missions describing how for the past several weeks the "rebel authorities on Anjouan" have increased "arbitrary arrests, imprisonment and torture" of Anjouan residents, notably those who oppose the regime, throughout the island. In the main Anjouan town of Mutsamudu, Bacar's men are targeting the close family of President Sambi. The note states that Bacar's armed personal guards are forcing their way into homes and sacking them; those taken from inside are driven to unknown locations. The note closes by appealing to the international community to condemn these "inadmissible attacks on human rights" and to remind Bacar that such acts will "not be tolerated or go unpunished under international legislation on crimes against humanity."

¶13. (SBU) COMMENT: While we cannot confirm these reports from afar, it is almost certain that Bacar's men are dealing out rough physical treatment and beatings during the arbitrary arrests. With each public mention of the imminent "liberation" of Anjouan by Union Government officials, Bacar appears to be tightening his grip on the island's population. Meanwhile, pressure to act is on the rise, now coming from displaced Anjouanese who have fled to the neighboring island of Moheli. END COMMENT.

MARQUARDT